

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, October 24. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether the Delivery of a Gate and Fort, and Signing the Capitulation on the 3d. of October, gave King William and Queen Mary an actual Possession of the whole Town of Limerick, &c. there's a great Wager laid?

Ans. If the Gate and Fort belonged to the Garrison of Limerick, and if Limerick was comprehended in the Capitulation sign'd, then it was a sufficient acknowledgment that they cou'd hold it no longer, and therefore by Delivering up the Gate and Fort, (as the Keys of the Garrison) they gave an Actual Possession of the whole: Nor cou'd the signing of other Papers afterwards, or time spent, or Methods taken to dispose of so many thousands as were then in Garrison, destroy the Possession; for this was only done in Confirmation of the first Capitulation sign'd.

Quest. 2. I Vow'd, without any other Witness than God and my own Conscience, in a solemn manner, and without Passion or Profaneness, that I would relinquish suddenly an Office which I am possess'd of, binding my self to the strict performance by the severest of Imprecations, (not by a profane Oath, &c.) but Time that will make all things apparent, has shown me that this Vow extremely thwarts my Worldly Interest, and in humane probability will ruine it — without I break it, or tempt God by Committing my Affairs to an Extraordinary Providence? I entreat you not to slight this Query, but resolve it next Saturday; it coming within the RULES laid down in the Preface to your Second Volume.

Ans. The Question is very Curious, and too Nice to lay down our positive determinations upon't; however we shall give you our Opinion, and the Reasons of it, but desire they may not be so decisive (because they Favour your Interest) as to hinder you from advising with other Casuists upon it. According to the State of the Case, if you break your Vow, you are guilty of one certain Sin; if you keep it, you hazard the Commission of many uncertain Sins; but if one may miss, two may; and if two, all may, by some intervening Providences; therefore one Certain Evil is to be avoided before many Uncertain Ones. Besides, We ought not to do Evil, that Good may come of it; and 'tis a bold Adventure, for a little Temporal Enjoyment to hazard an Eternal one. Thus far the Case wou'd bear, if it can be prov'd that the Vow is Obligatory; but we don't believe it to be so, because 'tis a Rash Vow, as may be gathered from two Passages in the Query, viz. relinquish suddenly, and but Time which maketh all things apparent, &c. We'll put an Instance: Suppose I Vow to Kill, Cheat, or but to Turn such a Person out of some Employment, who is at my disposal, when he is thereby expos'd to such Temptations and Misfortunes that he is like to be ruin'd without some Extraordinary Providence to prevent it, which I yet can't foresee; in such a Case my Vow is Void as soon as Made, because 'tis a Vow against the Prerogatives of the Eternal Laws of Nature, which indispensibly obliges me to be Just and Merciful; and as I am a Christian, 'tis a Violation of Charity. So that to perform this Vow, is a Wickedness as well as to make it: Now if I can't in Justice treat another so, I ought not to treat my self so: For in the Eternal Law of Nature there is a particular Right and Priviledge stamp'd upon SELF, and hence it is that Self-Murder is a greater Sin than Murdering another; the first is a breach of one Obligation, the last of both, viz. The Law of Nature, and the Rights of it — But the Case yet admits of another alteration: If this Office was got, or is kept by unjust Means, if it necessarily exposes you to Sin by the Practice of it, or tyes you to ill Company, then you ought to forsake it, whether you Vow or No. 'Tis a strange sort of Curiosity to divest our selves of our Native Freedom, and impose greater Burdens upon our selves than God and Nature have design'd: We think no one

ought to do it, 'till they find the Task already set 'em, so easie as not to exercise all their Care, but such Persons perhaps are not to be found. — It wou'd be a determination of no little moment, if all our Casuistical Divines wou'd fix the Crisis, viz. How far a Man (under all the Circumstances of Life) has Power to bind or dispose of himself, and how far not.

Quest. 3. A Young Gentleman falling in Love with a young Lady, (not inferiour in her Fortune to his own) and Married, but through some little Discontent his Relations took at it, after they were Married, hawk'd his Fortunes; and hers being not sufficient to maintain 'em both equal to their former Credit, in Case of Fruition, he being willing not to make 'em both miserable together, with such Children as probably they might have, is willing to deny himself the Enjoyment of her, 'till such time as his Fortunes shall give him a better Prospect of living equal to their former Credit. — The Gentleman making it a Matter of Conscience, Whether such a Resolution be a Sin, seeing Providence brought 'em together without any unlawful means?

Ans. We believe not the Separation for a time (both consenting) to be a Sin: But if it be continued, 'tis our Opinion, That 'tis the ready way for a great many sins — Industry is bless'd alwayes with a Competency, and 'tis expected we shou'd believe nothing more to be absolutely necessary; and to this end we are taught to Pray for OUR DAILY BREAD: If this World were to be our End, our Eternity of aboad, it wou'd be worth our trouble to be solicitous, and provide accordingly — We think a Distrust of God's Providence a greater Sin than is generally believ'd: We cou'd not distrust a good Man in his Promises, and why the Author of goodness, is a Riddle. It wou'd be a dismal Politick in a Commonwealth, that upon Losses or Poverty Families shou'd separate, besides the Temptations that such Persons are deserv'dly left to by God Almighty; for if I dare not believe him, he may justly Punish my Baseness with a greater Unhappiness. 'Tis our Judgment, that they immediately adjust their meaner Circumstances, and lay aside that fear of being despis'd for not being greater than others, for Opinion and the Prejudices of Custom have put a very undue Character upon the Stations of Life: Industry and Resignation will teach 'em to be happier in their present State, than their own Choice in any other Estate: For it may be laid down for a certain Maxim, That such Persons as take themselves out of God's Protection, are always at a loss, and know not how to dispose of themselves.

Quest. 4. Whether there's any such thing as a Hag, which the Common People fancy to be Witch-riding, when they are in their Beds in the Night-time, and as some say, when they are perfectly awake, and with such a Vehemency that they are not able to stir either Hand or Foot, or move the least Member of their Bodies, nor can utter one word distinctly, but make a kind of a grumbling Noise? — If in the Affirmative, what Instance meet you with in History? if in the Negative, what is it that is the Cause of it?

Ans. 'Tis effected both wayes, by Vapours from crude and undigested Concoctions, heat of Blood, as after hard Drinking, and several other Natural wayes; but sometimes 'tis really effected by Witches, which first gave the Name to the common oppression in Sleep call'd the Night Mare: History is full of such Instances, I shall only mention one, which I had from a Person that was an Eye and Ear-witness to all the Matter of Fact — A Boy that was worn out even to a Consumption by the common Load and Oppression of a Witch in the Night-time; sometimes he shifted Beds, and was quiet for a Night or two, but then was afflicted again; he was alwayes well in the Day-time, and eat his Meats well; an Elder Brother of his that came from the University, hearing the Relation of the Boy's Distemper, suppos'd the Reason of it, and order'd the Boy to lye with his Father,

Father, he himself designing to sleep in that Bed, and when Night came (according to my Friends words) he Charm'd the Room, as is usual, to retain a Thief, (for such things have been done, though we believe by no good means) and in the Night-time he heard the Lid of the Chest under the Window make a little Noise, as if a Cat or something else had leapt out of the Window upon it, whereupon he rose and struck a Light, and there stood an Old Woman, a Neighbour which he knew very well, in the midst of the Room; He bid her go, she answer'd, she cou'd not 'till he dismiss'd her, whereupon he took her by the Hand and led her down the Stairs, and sent her home, and bid her come in the Morning: Next Morning, as he was Discourfing his Father, she came, and Confess'd she us'd to lye upon the Child, because he was a peevish Boy, and hindered her of the Relief the Family us'd to give to her, but was not minded to Kill the Boy for his Parents sake; and being Question'd by the Scholar how she came to use such Tricks, — She answer'd, That a Man came to her House, who releiv'd her, afterwards fetch'd Blood of her, which she shew'd, and there was a kind of Impression of Letters, which the Scholar prick'd again, and sent her home; upon which she was mightily terrify'd with the Apparition of the Man threatening her, which she told the Scholar; upon this the Parents of the Boy caus'd her to go to the Church continually, and afforded her a Relief during her Life, but were a long time before they cou'd teach her the Lords Prayer, and hinder her from stopping her Ears, but at length she overcame all her wicked suggestions.

Quest. 5. Sometime since being in Company with some Merchants of Maryland, a Discourse arose of a Gentlewoman of that Countrey, who being with Child, from the Quickning to the Birth, whenever she brushed against any thing, her Cloaths would seem all on fire, and crackled; the Reason of this being guess'd at, a Wager was laid, and it is refer'd to your Society, what the meaning on't shou'd be? Pray let us have your Answer as soon as you can.

Ans. Histories afford us several such Instances: Perhaps 'twas something of this Nature that is recorded of Alexander. The Royal Society have taken Notice of it in their Transactions: But the true Reason we conceive to be this — There is a Phosphorus (or a Chymical Preparation) both liquid and dry, Artificially made of Urine or Blood, which will fire by the Touch or Motion of the Air; and 'tis very probable that Nature had supply'd these Persons with such a Quality, without the help of Artificial Chymistry, and that by the Transpiration, Effluviations or Steams of these Saline Particles, the Cloaths of the Person might imbibe the Quality too, which by Touch or Air would have the Effect mention'd in the Question. Historians give some Accounts that such Instances do sometimes happen to Parties troubled in Mind.

Quest. 6. Why do Drowned People swim?

Ans. 'Tis already Answer'd.

Quest. 7. In Delaun's Present State of London, he tells us of a Dislemper some time since, called Sudor Anglicanus, or the Sweating Disease: Your Thoughts upon 'it?

Ans. The Polonians us'd to Plat their Hair, and tye it up, and there was once a Disease amongst 'em, call'd Plica Polonica; for their Hair being cut or broke, it bled, and they dyed upon it; but we suppose this and the Sudor Anglicanus were no Natural Distempers, but as immediate Distempers from Heaven as the Plague or Pestilence.

Quest. 8. Something rises from my Heart in my sleep, and goes up to my Head, when I struggle it goes away, and the next Day after three or four of these Fits, I have a strange Dizziness in my Head — Query — The Reason hereof?

Ans. If from the Vapours of the Succus Nutritius, which are more or less, according to the abundance or deficiency of that Juice; bleeding, refrigerating, and a contrary Dyet, are prevalent to remove 'em — If from Obstructions, observe a Temperate Feeding; if from Straitness of Vessels, use thinner Dyet; if the Querist knows not which of these, let him Practice as if he wou'd Cure 'em all at once.

Quest. 9. What is it that Causes the Noise in Thunder?

Ans. Nitre.

Quest. 10. What is the strongest Creature in the Universe, considering its bulk?

Ans. Perhaps the Ant. — The Author of this Query sent several more, to prove a Non-cessation of Miracles, which we don't deny.

Quest. 11. What are we to believe of Chiromancy?

Ans. 'Tis (perhaps) the silliest, Nonsensical Notion, in the World, in that sense as 'tis usually taken, viz. To know what will happen by it.

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